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How This Drag Queen Is Fostering an Inclusive Outdoor Community

Pattie Gonia, U.S.

by Kyla Mandel

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Pattie Gonia was born on a mountaintop in 2018, strutting along a trail in six-inch heels. What started as a fun Instagram video turned into a viral sensation. “It was unbelievable to see the queer community that was a part of these outdoor spaces,” says the artist, environmentalist, and drag queen. “I was like, there are people here that want community, that are ready for it.”

Five years later, the community she founded has brought together more than 750,000 people to celebrate the outdoors and queerness and, hopefully, save the planet. “If we want to make a climate movement where people are actually joining it, we have to make it inclusive,” she says.

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In 2022, Pattie Gonia (who goes by Wyn Wiley when out of drag) co-founded the Outdoorist Oath, which fosters outdoor community for BIPOC, queer, and underrepresented groups. Her mission has brought her to the White House and Alaska, where she filmed a climate music video with Yo-Yo Ma and Indigenous trans musician Quinn Christopherson. She road-tripped from California to Oregon, where she lives, to film a show about the climate movement. And she brings Pride to rural areas across the country and performs at sold-out climate-themed drag shows.

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Pattie Gonia arrived at a pivotal time. Climate-fueled extreme weather is alternately scorching and flooding the United States, while anti-drag bills have been proposed in over a dozen states. “I think if you receive hate or dissonance or opposition in this world, you just might be onto something,” she says. To those who say an environmentalist drag queen seems strange, she responds, “Drag’s history has always been activism. … I’m just trying to use my art and fight for what I love.”

For Pattie Gonia, 33, building a strong, joyous community is essential to success. “I want to see a world where we don’t see each other as parts of a well-oiled machine, but as a well-nurtured meadow, where everyone has a role to play, and so much is possible when we work together.”